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most of the weddings are celebrated during Carnival on
527 new wine. Small wonder that a whole lot of customs and
[522] Carnival jokes multiplied, not so much at weddings as about weddings which were not held ... Especially at the end of Carnival, at its «tail», round about Shrove Tuesday, when all disillusionment and lost hopes become evident. There are few such bitter sayings as this short and painful lament which contains a wealth of sarcasm :

Shrove Tuesday, all gone ...
The day when girls are left at home !

The last day of Carnival is the most frolicsome, the noisiest and most ironical moment of the year ; it is the time of the freeest entertainments and most generous feasts. It is the poor man's «horn of plenty» ; «compared to it Christmas is nothing» — say the Palóc Hungarians — «it is the feast of the spendthrifts».

Of course amateur performers are not missing amidst the many Carnival jokes. In some places they «carry out jail birds» on Carnival's tail. Two lads are wound round from top to toe with straw ropes, on the head of one they put a plumed hat, on the head of the other they tie a scarf ; their faces are blackened with soot, they have to hold a hatchet or an axe, both are chained and thus they are paraded from house to house. In their wake follow boys and girls with the accompaniment of music and song. At each house they are given something, and from the things thus collected they arrange a grand dinner. In other places King Marrow-bone is buried or they «carry out winter», as Prince Cibere is carried out at the end of Lent, in the person of some willing performer. The custom of dragging a tree-trunk through the village is also still alive. A big stem is pulled along with ropes and in front of the houses of marriageable girls the procession stops, shouting :

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scenes, such fascinating and charming dances occur as during the recruiting of Hungarian soldiers. The memory of all this is alive in their childish rhymes : 857

Bishop Blase sent out
His smart recruiting sergeants,
He had his red flag
Stuck into the midst of the market.
Now dear little friend
Let's have a grand time :
Our bottle is filled with wine
Let us dance gaily and happily !

Of course there is no question of wine, but the baby troupe is truly a gay, lively, joking crowd. Like the real recruiters, the dancing hussars, who praised the gallant soldier life, they praise the school where the master provides the music, and if he bends his whip, there is plenty of opportunity for dancing . . .

Before learning became obligatory, Saint Blase's soldiers lured the truants with the beauties of learning to spell. As Saint Blase's day falls in the Carnival, there are plenty of references to it in the eloquent spelling rhymes : 857 522

S, E, D : this little girl is so depres*SED*,
that she could not put up her hair
and did not get married !
E, E, E : don't be so d*EjEctEd !*

But they laugh also at themselves according to the following verse :

unch, unch, unch : what's the scholar's *lunch?*
we know that it is soup or pap,
I wish I had never seen or tasted it !
unch, unch, unch : what's the scholar's *lunch?*

Other well-known jokes also appear in their verses, such as the dragging of the trunks along the village to enrage the girls who did not get married :

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Ohi, ohi, ohi, away,
To-day it is Ash-Wednesday,
Girls, you better drag the trunk
Onto the nearest main road.

857 The military touch displayed in these two customs[1] is
[212] the explanation of the fact that Hungarian children grew so fond of them, although they are purely Christian — that is fairly recent — customs. The spelling is also of Western origin; it is only here that the Hungarians learnt Western writing. It is true that this was very long ago : already in 1055 Hungarian words were written with Latin letters. Their ancient writing, which the Hungarians had brought with them from the East, had been runes traced from right to left. Bonfinio, the court historian of King Mathias, made this comment on it : — «with few signs they express much meaning». The oldest document of this ancient Hungarian writing dates from 1515. But the ancient runes were gradually forgotten, and the Hungarians also enlisted as Saint Gregory's knights
[867] and Saint Blase's spelling soldiers. — They learnt a great many good and beautiful things. They learnt the Golden ABC, which had arranged in alphabetical order all the highest Christian moral teachings, and nothing was left out of this collection ! This is how it began :

a : all that you do not want for yourself
you must not do it to others !

b : burden the servants of your house
as much as you want to be burdened yourself !

When the Protestant students of Sárospatak (a historic Hungarian college) grew tired of these perpetual moral teachings, they made parodies of these verses. This is what they invented for the letters :

[1 [i.e. The recruiting of truants for their schools and the singing of spelling rhymes -- Analyst]]